

October 8, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing in opposition to the proposed Kentucky Medicaid waiver. More than anything, I find its assumptions about people receiving benefits inaccurate and as a result its design fundamentally flawed. For example, it promotes the perception that the 440,000 people added to receive Medicaid benefits under the Affordable Care Act don't already work, wouldn't want to work or contribute, and that they are unwilling to accept "personal responsibility." However, my understanding of the initiative was its design for the working poor, people often working multiple part-time jobs at minimum or low wages, and who are not eligible for employer health care programs.

People I've known in these circumstances juggle layer after layer of life complexities, having fragile lives where a seemingly small disruption can spell disaster, often living paycheck to paycheck. For example, something that would be merely an inconvenience for a privileged citizen, such as a needed car repair, could be unmanageable for someone without money to cover the repair – causing loss of income from missed work or even a loss of job. Similarly, something that seems like a nominal monthly fee for a privileged citizen can be entirely unmanageable for someone living on the margins. Additionally, requirements to earn something that used to be provided as standard issue is a recipe for failure. Given the most basic understanding of motivation, punishment, and control, this plan, if approved, will predictably not "work," at least on any significant scale.

While there's much to be said for the power of personal contribution, the dignity of giving of oneself, especially for people who've been characteristically captured on the receiving end of life, conditions of working success will be based on providing access and opportunity to good employment with fair compensation -- not by tightening the screws.

As a Christian Kentucky citizen, I'm compelled to add that Jesus had much to say about the proper use of money and how it is that people who are materially poor should be treated. For those interested in Christianity, as many Frankfort people purport to be, this proposal does not meet biblical standards. I urge all of the people behind the development and furthering of this proposal to devote time with the people targeted by the waiver -- seeking to understand and identify with their life circumstances. Then structure budget priorities in a way that current and expanded Medicaid for the working poor is sustainable or develop an alternative. I can't accept at face value Kentucky's inability to afford 5% of the cost next year, increasing to 10 % *without* a full analysis of the real social cost of masses of Kentucky citizens living in poverty without access to health care -- compared to other things we *are* funding.

Finally, I'm concerned that the proposed waiver is tantamount to a set-up to end the current program, because it contains provisions that won't be feasible for Kentucky's citizen along with certain eligibility requirements that have already been rejected by CMS in proposals submitted by other states.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Milton Tyree', with a stylized, cursive script.

Milton Tyree